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To India World Peace Means the End of Colonialism.

Following Britain's declaration of war on Germany in 1914, India was also declared a belligerent country by the British Viceroy of India who was independent of the legislative institutions of India. He was only subordinate to the Secretary of State for India in London and responsible to the British Government and British Parliament. Mr. E. Agnes R. Heigh wrote in the Asiatic Review "India is not fighting for any reason connected with the rights and wrongs of the war. European disagreements do not touch India. Indians have no grievances of their own against Germany, a country which has treated them with kindness and regard and whose scholars, moreover, have shown quite as much appreciation of ancient Indian culture as any other in Europe. There is little social intercourse between the British officials and the Indian people that the suggestion of strong loyalty to the cause of the Empire did not arise" (1)

This statement does express correctly the attitude of common people of India to India's participation in the first world war.

But various economic interests of Indian origin had set their different goals to achieve in the process of the war. The rising Indian bourgeoisie having absolutely no say over the military and political course of the war hoped to derive some commercial and constitutional privileges. Because of the war time situation Britain was compelled to reduce the amount of manufactured goods imported into India. At the same time the British Government took the line of making fullest use of India's material resources including industrial output for war purposes. For practical purpose this required some relaxation of the policy of hindering India's industrial development so long practised by the British Government. In order to win the support of the Indian bourgeoisie they thought it expedient to give certain concessions in customs and excise policy. In 1915 five percent duty had been imposed on all imported goods which helped Indian national capitalists taking first place in the cotton textile industry. (2). As such their political exponents had no time to discuss the root causes of the war and subsequent sufferings of the common people.

The Indian National Congress (INC) was officially on the side of allies and wished victory to England. At the 29th Congress session of the INC held in Madras 1914, its President Mr. Bhupendranath Bose declared "The war has come to us as a trumpet call". At its 30th session held in Bombay in 1915 the Congress President Mr. S.P. Sinha expressed a feeling of profound pride that India had not fallen behind other portions of British Empire but has stood shoulder to shoulder with them by the side of the imperial mother in the hour of her sorest trial" (3).

M.K. Gandhi, who was then entering into Indian Politics after his heroic civil disobedience movement against the racist regime of South Africa, urged the peasants of his native Gujarat to join the army and think imperially. He and B.G. Tilak would even go to the extent of trying to raise money and men for the British forces - Tilak who came out of the British Jail after serving 6 years term. Gandhi wrote to the then viceroy that he could move his countrymen retrace their steps and make them withdraw the Congress resolution and not whisper 'Home rule' or responsible Government during the war. To his own people he said that the Gateway of India's freedom is on the French soil. His war effort brought him a medal from the British Government (4). Indeed, more than half a million Indians fought for England in Europe and the Eastern Front. The contributor to the Indian Review noted: 'One beneficial result of this war will be that racial antagonism will to a large extent die out and the whiteman will recognise that the brown or blackman who has fought side by side with him and shed his blood without stint does not deserve to be and cannot be despised (5). Many leading Indians believed that Indians were denied higher posts in the administration and the commissioned ranks in the army because of deep seated racial antagonism.

'Home Rule' demands made by Mrs. Annie Besant and B.S. Tilak and supported by the INC following the Irish Home rule movement meant self rule for India within the British Empire and the method to achieve it was strictly constitutional. Even this harmless demand of 'Home Rule' frightened the British Government which put Mrs. Besant under detention without trial and tried to imprison Tilak again.

To the militant nationalists who believed in the violent overthrow of the British rule and terrorist tactics as a method the war seemed a heaven-sent opportunity, draining India of troops ( the number of white soldiers went down at one point to only 15,000 (6) and bringing the possibility of financial and military help from German and Turkish enemies of Britain. A grandiose plan of getting German

arms and staging revolt in the Indian army failed because of the British precautionary measures.

But those militant nationalists who lived in England, France and other countries of the allied camp fled to Germany and tried to help their Indian Comrades by running a ceaseless campaign against the imperialist character of the allied powers. This group declared themselves as the European Central Committee of Indian nationalists and submitted a memorandum to the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee of the Second International in November 1917.

The Dutch-Scandinavian Committee was formed to sponsor a peace proposal among belligerent countries of Europe. Unfortunately the Committee could not function due to its dubious sponsorship. In the last phase of the first world war the German Government, through the social-democrats of Germany who voted for the war credit, tried to mobilise social democrats of the belligerent and neutral countries to organise a peace conference from whence they would try to manage favourable peace terms. In the second half of April 1917 the Danish Social Democrat Borgbjerg, who was connected with the social-chauvinists of Germany, came to Petrograd and on behalf of the United Committee of the labour parties of Denmark, Norway and Sweden proposed that Socialist parties of Russia should take part in a peace conference to be called at Stockholm in May, 1917. On April 23 (May 6) Borgbjerg gave a report at a sitting of the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet frankly declaring that the German Government would agree to the peace terms ~~put forward~~ the German social democrats would put forward at the socialist peace conference. But Lenin analysing the peace terms put forward by Borgbjerg and the refusal of the Anglo-French social chauvinists to participate in the conference came to the conclusion that the whole affair was the product of German diplomacy and Borgbjerg was a German agent. Ultimately the conference could not be held due to lack of participants.(7)

To the European Central Committee of Indian nationalists the peace proposals formulated by the Dutch-Scandinavia Committee seemed utterly dishonest and imperialistic. Firstly, these proposals incorporated a demand of 'cease-fire' so that the question of liberation of Asia and Africa might be kept in cold storage. Secondly, by 'mankind' they understood men of Europe only - and men of christian faith - like Irish, Armenian, Serbian etc. and not countries like India and Egypt. Pointing to India as the root cause of the wars - the memo of the

Indian nationalists in Europe stated that the root cause of the wars during the last 100 years was the possession of India by the British. ~~Even~~ Lord Curzon, once Viceroy of India, had mentioned that all British annexations in Africa and Asia have been made to ensure Britain's Indian possessions. Curzon underlined the central geographical position of India in relation to Africa and Asia, her growing population, her commercial resources, her reserve of military power. In fact, no country has been so often the cause of international conflicts like India. (British-French, British-Dutch, British-Portuguese, British-Muslim conflicts). Because of the possession of India, the sovereign rights of Persia and Afghanistan have not been respected. Siam, Nepal and Tibet have been brought down to impotence, Burma recklessly annexed, China - a victim of ~~opium~~ opium war, Egypt occupied. The Dutch-Scandinavian peace proposals also avoided the question of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Indo-China, Philippines and Java. The European Central Committee of the Indian nationalists concluded that no lasting peace would be possible without giving full freedom to the countries mentioned above or in other words lasting peace can be achieved by bringing an end to colonialism (8). It is very significant that without any contact with the left socialists of the Second International, the Indian nationalists in Europe came very close to their views. What is also important is that similar propaganda was also done in India - not by a professional politician and his followers but by India's great poet Rabindranath Tagore - a Nobel laureate and his friend Ramananda Chatterjee (1865 - 1943) who edited the journal 'Modern Review' from 1907 to his death. Tagore began to write about the nature of capitalist development; imperialism and its predatory activities even before the end of the 19th century.

In this connection it should be kept in view that the socio-economic situation of India being much less developed than that of Europe (the working class did not form even one percent of 303 million people in 1911) (9) Indian perception of the questions relating to war and peace could not develop from the same base. The debates that were carried on since the birth of the First International to the <sup>Basle</sup> Congress of the Second International had hardly any repercussion on the thinking process of Indian leaders of public opinion. Firstly these debates centred on the role of proletariats organised in societies dealing in problems which confronted them with the employers forming the base of the ruling classes of individual countries. Due to this confrontation a new consciousness developed amongst workers about the mis-doings of the ruling class in its internal as well as external relations. Thus in 1866 at the out break of the war

between Prussia and Austria the general council of the First International could denounce the war as a quarrel between two despots with neither of whom the proletariat could have any sympathy and the duty of the working class was to achieve its own emancipation by overthrowing the despots in a single blow. In the Lausanne Congress of 1st International the resolution pointed out that the burden of the war is also to be borne by the working class and being deprived of the means of subsistence they are compelled to shed one another's blood. So to banish the war as a social phenomenon - a classless society is to be established. In 1868 the Brussels Congress of First International - called upon workers to cease work in case the war breaks out in their respective countries. The various Congresses of the Second International discussed the question of war and peace and accepted resolutions asking socialist delegates of the parliaments to vote against war credits and for disarmament. Its Paris Congress in 1900 accepted a resolution moved by Rosa Luxemburg against militarism and colonialism.

By the time of the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International in 1907 the menace of the first world war was looming large on the horizon. The Congress received four drafts of resolution on war. A sub-committee with Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg proposed a new draft out of these four drafts which was carried unanimously. The Congress of Copenhagen and Basle confirmed this resolution. It set down that the task and duty of all socialist parties in the event of the outbreak of the war were to fight to bring it to an end and to exert all their efforts to utilise the crises brought about by the war in order to arouse the masses of the people for the over-throw of capitalism (10).

But when the war broke out in 1914 the majority of the European delegates who attended these Congresses sided with their native bourgeoisie in the name of national defence.

Indians who attended the Congresses of the Second International were Dadabhai Naoroji (Amsterdam - 1904), Madam Cama and S.R. Rana (Stuttgart - 1907), V.V.S Iyer and Syamaji Krishna Varma (Copenhagen 1910) (11). Dadabhai was a very distinguished leader of the INC which was then representing the rising bourgeoisie of India and had no mass following. The others were representing a tiny group of left nationalists who kept contact with the militant nationalists of India working secretly to overthrow the British rule by violent means and with the help of

the foreign powers inimical to the British. None of them had any contact with workers and peasants of India and there ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> no organised movements of them who formed the vast majority of India's population. They were there to find allies for India's liberation. It is, therefore, no wonder that the tiny group of English educated and politically conscious men of India did ~~derive~~ <sup>derive</sup> anything out of the debates on war and peace carried inside the socialist circles of Europe. Indian opinion on the question of war and peace during 1914-1918 veered round the conception of imperialism as understood by the nationalist circles and moral-ethical arguments were used to explain away the issues which led to the out break of the first world war.

The sub-marine warfare by Germany (the German submarine Emden bombed Madras for half an hour) interfered with the movements of ships owned and controlled by the British. Many British business men and army people returned to England to help the war efforts of British isla<sup>e</sup>. At one time the number of British soldiers <sup>(12)</sup> in the Indian army came down to 15,000 only. Because of the very limited export of raw jute, oil seeds, leather and hide - peasants and small business men of India suffered (13) whereas the owners of the Indian Cotton Mills and Indian steel and Iron merchants gained much from the war situations although common people suffered by the rise of prices of manufactured goods and food. The intensified exploitation of the industrial workers expressed itself mainly in speed-up (14).

But-wardly there was no movement against the British war efforts in India and the handful of the militant nationalists of India who attempted to over-throw the British rule by organising insurgency in the army were mostly arrested and kept in detention in various jails without trial. For this purpose many repressive rules and enactments were promulgated by the British Indian Government.

Under the circumstances ~~to~~ to run any continuous campaign against war as imperial was an extremely risky job. But the poet Tagore and his close associate Ramananda Chatterjee, the editor of a periodical 'Modern Review' (hence forth would be referred as MR) did take the risk in their own way - the former through innumerable articles and lectures and the latter through his periodical MR in which articles from European and American sources were printed discussing the question of war and peace during the entire period of the first world war. At least sixteen years before the first world war the poet Tagore addressed a meeting in Calcutta organised to protest against the promulgation of repressive Press Act by the then British Indian ~~Government~~ Government from a written text entitled 'Kanta Roth' (gagging) in

which he stated; I am neither a revolutionary nor a hero and perhaps not a fool either. And he warned the foreign rulers of the consequences that might follow because of this Act. Citing the example of the method adopted by the mutinous soldiers of 1857 to pass information from one area to another by hand made breads he declared that if genuine grievances of Indian people are not allowed to be expressed through a Free Press - all sorts of rumours would create similar situations. In another article entitled 'Imperialism' written in 1905 - he exposed the cruel and predatory character of imperialism with reference to Czarist Russia and England. In fact in most of the articles written between the last decades of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century Tagore exposed the British rule in India and asked his compatriots to unite keeping in view the diverse ethnic, religious and social divisions. Self help and sustained social and political work through village associations were themes of his articles.

The day after the out break of the first world war - he spoke before the inmates of his Santiniketan (The abode of peace - which later took the shape of an University named Biswa Bharati (world in India) to the effect that the war was a retribution vid ting sinful society. He called belligerence of both the groups (allied and central powers) 'world-sin' (Biswa-pap) to be atoned by world as a whole. In an article captioned Laraiemul (The origin of the war) written in December 1914 he stated that in the feast of plundering the world markets Germany came very late to find that there was no seat reserved for her in the table. So she decided to grab whatever was left over on the plea that might is right. And the origin of this theory did not lie in the brain cells of the learned men of Germany- but could be found in the history of modern Europe. As I have pointed out that in his Essays written between 1880 to 1910 he noted from his personal experience how Irish members of the British parliament fared badly at the hands of the British members, how Britain forced China to consume opium on the pretext of trade, how Belgium oppressed people of Congo and the ruthless oppression of Negroes in America. In the period between 1901 - 1913 Tagore became chronicler and commentator on the growing tension amongst imperialist powers of Europe basing themselves on two slogans such as 'might is right' and 'my country right or wrong'. Before he elaborated his thesis 'the Cult of Nationalism' in his celebrated lectures in Japan and USA by 1915-1916, his close associate Chatterjee printed significant quotations from

Romain

Tolstoy, Karl Liebkrecht and ~~Romain~~ Rolland who castigated national chauvinism in strongest terms. Tolstoy and Romain Rolland were well known to educated Indians. Karl Liebkrecht and Marx perhaps for the first time got some publicity in India through the articles of Modern Review.

Personally Tagore did not take sides in the first world war although M R had to write for allied Victory possibly in order to avoid repressive press laws. Mrs. Annie Besant's journal which was propagating the demand for 'Home rule' (under the British empire), was suppressed. Even then M R published in its December number 1914 a report of a peace meeting in England addressed by one Mrs. Pearson to the Lancashire women's guild of Christian service. The speaker asked; "How many who are now fighting against us, has as little to do with the causes of the war, as we had and entered into it as un-willingly. For there has been an encouraging thing about this war that I suppose - there never was a war into which the people of those countries engaged, entered with so little passion and so un-willingly. That is surely an indication that the causes of peace is making progress. In the 15th May 1915 issue of MR reprinted an article written by one Mr. Gardiner and published in the London Daily news and leader. The writer declared in this article that Karl Liebkrecht was the bravest man of Europe and the un-crowned King of Potsdam because he refused to vote for the war credit in the German Diet. Narrating the heroic story of his father late William Liebknecht who with Bebel courted imprisonment in order to fight the German aggression the writer decided that Karl had surpassed his father in his revolutionary activities. Mr. Gardiner quoted the concluding portion of Karl's speech in the German Diet which, according to him was the most important indictment in history: "Under protest against the war, against those who are responsible for it; against the capitalist purposes for which it is being waged, against the plan of annexations; against the violation of neutrality of Belgium and Luxemburg". Poet Tagore perhaps derived tremendous enthusiasm from Count Tolstoy's article 'Patriotism and Govt.' re-printed in May 1914 issue of MR as follows:

"Patriotism in our times is an unnatural sentiment, unreasonable, dangerous causing a great part of those misfortunes from which humanity is suffering and that therefore, this sentiment ought not to be instilled by education as a new dogma; but on the contrary ought to be crushed and destroyed by all means under control of sensible people. Patriotism and its result war, gives a great income to the newspapers and a benefit to the majority of merchants. Every writer, teacher and professor, the more desirous he is to make sure

of his position, the more he will preach patriotism. All nations of the so called christian world are led by patriotism to such beastiality, that not only do those people which are unavoidable in a position to kill or be killed, desire and enjoy slaughter but also people living at peace in their own homes in Europe and America at every war thanks to quick and easy communication by the Press take the position of the spectators at the Roman circus and as such, take pleasure in slaughter and blood thirsty Cry, "Finish him" Not only adults but clean bright children, according to their nationality, take pleasure in learning these have been killed and torn with leaden bullets not 700 - but a thousand. It is a dangerous sentiment, because it destroys the useful and delightfully peaceful relations of one nation to another and it specially brings about the military organisation of the Government by means of which authority can and does always accomplish its worst. It is a shameful sentiment because it turns the man not simply into a slave but into a fighting cock, a bull a gladiator who sacrifices his power and life not for his own aims but for those of his own Government. It is an immoral sentiment because instead of recognising himself as child of God as our christianity teaches".

Now added to this indictment against patriotism was Romain Rolland's famous appeal which was fully published in the February 1915 issue of MR. The editor prefaced the text of the appeal by stating that "Romain Rolland, the greatest thinker amongst the French thus showed us that even to-day it is possible to be both an ardent patriot and at the same time a faithful citizen of what he calls 'a new city of God.' While blaming every body, particularly the church and the labour parties for the war, Rolland said: the two moral forces whose weakness this contagious war shows up most clearly are christianity and socialism. These rival apostles of religion and secular internationalism have suddenly developed into the most ardent nationalists. Rolland went on to declare that imperialism must be destroyed if the war is to be abolished. For every nation to a greater or lesser extent has an imperialism of her own. Whether it be military, financial, feudal, republican, social or intellectual, it is always the Octopus sucking the best blood of Europe.."

MR informed its readers about the debates going on in Europe and America between the war party and the peace party. A left nationalist leader of India Lala Lajpat Roy wrote a long article in which he referred to two books - one namely 'Germany and

the Next War' by General von Bernhardy published in October 1911 and the other named 'Germany and England' by Professor Cramb. Professor Cramb addressed the students of the Cambridge University in February 1913 on the basis of this book. According to Roy General von Bernhardy believed that the war is a biological necessity while Professor Cramb admitted that all England's war for the past 500 years have been fought for empire. "the empire which has ceased to advance, has begun to recede and therefore to decline". Poet Tagore's close relative Ajit Chakraborty took part in this debate and pointed out that the application of Charles Darwin's natural selection theory to ethics by Huxley and Herbert Spencer has provided the philosophical basis for the war mongers. That theory proclaimed savagely, shamelessly and ~~insanely~~ insanely that the weak must perish. It tries to establish the right of might and the morality of selfishness. Referring to Prince Kropotkin's book 'Mutual Aid' Chakraborty concluded that egoism and altruism work hand in hand in the progress of evolutions which Darwin, Huxley and Herbert Spencer failed to see. Ajit Chakraborty also accused Nietzsche who, according to Mr. Chakraborty was profoundly influenced by the idea of natural selection and of the survival of the fittest.

But there was another contributor who defended Nietzsche: First, Nietzsche was a Pole - not a German. Secondly, his system of thought is that might is nearly always wrong, the great struggle of life is always of right against might, of enlightenment against prejudices, of knowledge against ignorance, of the minority against the majority, of the few who think against the hordes who do not think - the warfare which he believed in, was individual warfare, warfare of independence to free individual from the bondage of tyranny of the state and society.

Disputing Britain's arguments against Germany another contributor wrote in the March 1913 issue of MR: The present holocaust of blood in Europe is only a monumental outburst of the military and predatory spirit which was long characterised Western civilisation.

Every issue of MR contained Tagore's Bengali poems and prose writings in English. And Tagore's Japan and American tours were being reported month after month. Therefore it would not be wrong to assume that he was fully briefed about the first world war before he launched his attack on national chauvinism captioned Nationalism.

He was in America in the last quarter of 1915 - addressing people in different cities of U.S.A. He told them that his understanding of the European concept of "Nation is one of organised gregariousness of gluttony, that is, it is a political and commercial machine - inhuman and without soul. The West lives in an atmosphere of fear, greed and panic due to the preying of one nation upon another for mutual wealth. Its civilisation is carnivorous and cannibolistic feeding upon the blood of weaker nations. Its one wish is to trade on the feableness of the rest of the world, like some insects that are bred in the paralysed flesh of victims kept just enough alive to make them toothsome and nutritious. For this his Nation has had and still has its richest pasture in Asia and Great China.

Asserting that man is a social animal in a moral world and human civilisation has progressed due to constant adjustments and co-operation he decried the theory of the survival of the fittest. Attacking the process of the growth of nation & state in Europe based on industrialisation and capitalist method of dehumanising workers, bureaucracy and the centralised state apparatus he declared: "the suspicion of man for man stings all the limbs of this civilisation like the hairy of the nettle. Each country is casting its net of espionage into the slimy bottom of the other, fishing for their secrets, the treacherous secrets which breed in the oozy depths of diplomacy. And what is their secret service but the nation's underground trade in kidnapping, murder and treachery and all the ugly crimes bred in the depth of rottenness. Because each nation has its own history of thieving and lies and therefore these can only flourish international suspicion and jealousy". Tagore characterised the first world war as the war of retribution - a fatality visiting a Europe rolling in national pride and imperial greed. Tagore's denunciation of the Nation & States of Europe was the work of pacifist and of an internationalist which idea, as explained by Romain Rolland was rejected both by the christian church and socialism of the second International.

The Detroit Mich Free Press commented on his speech made on November 12, 1916 "A Profound message with masculine force he stripped modern civilisation until it stood naked and grotesque before the shocked mental vision. What an indictment of the pretensions of the British Government! What an arraignment of nations and powers! The Rousseaus, the Jefforsons, The Karl Marxes, the Bryces and the Wilsons seem superficial in the presence of this swarthy analyst. The great

corpulent bodies of modern commercialism, the boilers and engines of modern nations and the profuberant prosperity of the Western world - all are soulless structures built up of grawed bones of the weak whose ignorance is capitalised. With the single exception of Bertrand Russel we do not know of a second Englishman of fame who has disparaged nationalism on similar grounds and Russel's indictments are much later than Tagore's."

But Tagore said that he had met in the west 'men who had a vision of a world society and amongst them he mentioned Bertrand Russel who was a conscientious objector during the First World War and was imprisoned for his opposition to war. Mr. Russel had used Tagore's poem 'where the mind is without fear' as the motto of his pamphlet 'the philosophy of Pacifism' issued by the League of Peace and Freedom from London in July, 1915. Tagore wanted to present his book 'Nationalism' which contained his lectures delivered in U.S.A. Japan and India to the American President Woodrow Wilson - but the British ambassador to Washington had told the White House not to accept the book because the poet, according to the British Government was involved in anti-British ~~plots~~ Plots! The poet did not fare well to his countrymen as well - perhaps because in order to carry his campaign against the capitalist civilisation and European war - he gave a good certificate to the Government of India although he ~~vehemently~~ vehemently exposed the mis-dæings of the British Nation in her relation to India.

Tagore was no cosmopolitan - he appreciated the varieties of ethnic groups living with their beautiful culture - but he was a true internationalist - who, even to this day, courts displeasure and calumny from the national chauvinist group of bourgeoisie all over the capitalist world.

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**TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TÜSTAV TARİH ARAŞTIRMA VAKFI**